**Source: Dutch Colonies, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior**

Although the Netherlands only controlled the Hudson River Valley from 1609 until 1664, in that short time, Dutch entrepreneurs established New Netherland, a series of trading posts, towns, and forts up and down the Hudson River that laid the groundwork for towns that still exist today. Fort Orange, the northernmost of the Dutch outposts, is known today as Albany; New York City's original name was New Amsterdam.

In 1609, two years after English settlers established the colony of Jamestown in Virginia, the Dutch East India Company hired English sailor Henry Hudson to find a northeast passage to India. After unsuccessfully searching for a route above Norway, Hudson turned his ship west and sailed across the Atlantic. Hudson hoped to discover a "northwest passage," that would allow a ship to cross the entirety of the North American continent and gain access to the Pacific Ocean, and from there, India. After arriving off the coast of Cape Cod, Hudson eventually sailed into the mouth of a large river, today called the Hudson River. Making his way as far as present-day Albany before the river became too shallow for his ship to continue north, Hudson returned to Europe and claimed the entire Hudson River Valley for his Dutch employers.

After unsuccessful efforts at colonization, the Dutch Parliament chartered the "West India Company," a national-joint stock company that would organize and oversee all Dutch ventures in the Western Hemisphere. Sponsored by the West India Company, 30 families arrived in North America in 1624, establishing a settlement on present-day Manhattan. Much like English colonists in Virginia, however, the Dutch settlers did not take much of an interest in agriculture, and focused on the more lucrative fur trade. In 1626, Director General Peter Minuit arrived in Manhattan, charged by the West India Company with the task of administering the struggling colony. Minuit "purchased" Manhattan Island from Native American Indians for the now legendary price of 60 guilders ($25.00), formally established New Amsterdam, and consolidated and strengthened a fort located far up the Hudson River, named Fort Orange. The colony grew slowly, as settlers, responding to generous land-grant and trade policies, slowly spread north up the Hudson River.

The slow expansion of New Netherland, however, caused conflicts with both English colonists and Native Americans in the region. In the 1630s, the new Director General Wouter van Twiller sent an expedition out from New Amsterdam up to the Connecticut River into lands claimed by English settlers. Faced with the prospect of armed conflict, Twiller was forced to back down and recall the expedition, losing any claims to the Connecticut Valley. In the upper reaches of the Hudson Valley around Fort Orange, (present-day Albany) where the needs of the profitable fur trade required a careful policy of appeasement with the Iroquois Confederacy, the Dutch authorities maintained peace, but corruption and lax trading policies plagued the area. In the lower Hudson Valley, where more colonists were setting up small farms, Native Americans came to be viewed as obstacles to European settlement. In the 1630s and early 1640s, the Dutch Director Generals carried on a brutal series of campaigns against the area's Native Americans, largely succeeding in crushing the strength of the "River Indians," but also managing to create a bitter atmosphere of tension and suspicion between European settlers and Native Americans.

The year 1640 marked a turning point for the colony. The West India Company gave up its trade monopoly, enabling other businessmen to invest in New Netherland. Profits flowed to Amsterdam, encouraging new economic activity in the production of food, timber, tobacco, and eventually, slaves. In 1647, the most successful of the Dutch Director Generals arrived in New Amsterdam. Peter Stuyvesant found New Netherland in disarray. The previous Director General's preoccupation with the Native Americans and border conflicts with the English in Connecticut had greatly weakened other portions of colonial society. Stuyvesant became a whirlwind of activity, issuing edicts, regulating taverns, clamping down on smuggling, and attempted to wield the authority of his office upon a population accustomed to a long line of largely ineffective Director Generals.

Eventually, Stuyvesant cast his eyes upon the small settlements that had developed along the Hudson River Valley between Fort Orange and New Amsterdam. In 1652, 60-70 settlers had moved down from Fort Orange to an area where the Rondout Creek met the Hudson River, the site of present-day Kingston. The settlers farmed the fertile flood plains of the Esopus Creek side-by-side with the Esopus Indians, the original settlers of the area. Inevitably, land disputes brought the two sides to the brink of war, with both the Europeans and the Esopus Indians engaging in petty vandalism and kidnaping. In 1657, seeing the strategic practicality of a fort located halfway between New Amsterdam and Fort Orange, Director General Stuyvesant sent soldiers up from New Amsterdam to crush the Esopus Indians and help build a stockade with 40 houses for the settlers. Board by board, the settlers took their barns and houses down, and carted them uphill to a promontory bluff overlooking the Esopus Creek flood plain. They reconstructed their homes behind a 14-foot high wall made of tree trunks pounded into the ground that created a perimeter of about 1200 x 1300 feet. By day, the men left their walled village, which Director General Stuyvesant had named "Wiltwyck," to go out and farm their fields, leaving the women and children largely confined within the stockade. The villagers lived this way until 1664, when a peace treaty ended the conflict with the Indians.

Although Wiltwyck, the second large settlement established north of New Amsterdam, grew quickly, the very successes of the Stuyvesant administration put New Netherland in danger. The colony was proving quite profitable, New Amsterdam had developed into a port town of 1500 citizens, and the incredibly diverse population (only 50 percent were actually Dutch colonists) of the colony had grown from 2,000 in 1655 to almost 9,000 in 1664. "Problems" with Native Americans were mostly over, and stable families were slowly replacing single adventurers interested only in quick profits. New Netherland produced immense wealth for the Dutch, and other foreign nations began to envy the riches flowing out of the Hudson River Valley.

The Dutch lost New Netherland to the English during the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1664 only a few years after the establishment of Wiltwyck. Along the West Coast of Africa, British charter companies clashed with the forces of the Dutch West India Company over rights to slaves, ivory, and gold in 1663. Less about slaves or ivory, the Anglo-Dutch Wars were actually more about who would be the dominant European naval power. By 1664, both the Dutch and English were preparing for war, and King Charles of England granted his brother, James, Duke of York, vast American territories that included all of New Netherland. James immediately raised a small fleet and sent it to New Amsterdam. Director General Stuyvesant, without a fleet or any real army to defend the colony, was forced to surrender the colony to the English war fleet without a struggle. In September of 1664, New York was born, effectively ending the Netherlands' direct involvement in North America, although in places like Kingston, the influences of Dutch architecture, planning, and folklife can still be quite clearly seen.